

To: Chairperson and Authority Members

Date: September 6, 2001

From: Mehdi Morshed, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 6: First Screening Report (Draft)**

Discussion

In order to prepare a program level Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and federal Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) document, the Authority must review a range of reasonable alternatives, which could feasibly accomplish most of the project objectives while reducing expected environmental impacts. Public scoping meetings and consultation with other public agencies have helped the Authority to identify the potential environmental impacts to be analyzed in the EIR/EIS and to identify a broad range of potential alternatives to the proposed system.

Following the scoping process, screening is the process by which the Authority and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will determine which alternatives should be removed from further consideration and which alternatives will receive detailed review in the EIR/EIS. This process involves reviewing the broad range of alternatives which was identified and reducing the alternatives to those that represent a range of the most reasonable and feasible means of responding to the objectives, purpose and need for the project. These are the alternatives, which will receive detailed consideration in the EIR/EIS. This process also involves removing from further consideration those alternatives which, due to significant technical, environmental, and/or economic factors, would not serve to reasonably and feasibly meet the objectives, purpose and need for the proposed high-speed rail system. The screening report serves to document the significant reasons for removing certain alternatives from further consideration.

Each of the regional teams has been developing potential alignments and station locations based on the corridors described in the Business Plan and the past work of the Authority and Commission. At the August 1, 2001 Board meeting, staff and consultants from four of the regional teams (Bay Area-to-Merced; Los Angeles-Riverside-San Diego; Los Angeles-Orange County-San Diego; and Bakersfield-to-Los Angeles) presented the preliminary results of the screening evaluation for your consideration. Staff will present recommendations for each of these regions based on the preliminary results of the screening process and comments received during the formal scoping period. A draft copy of the "First Screening Report" is attached for your review. The purpose of this first screening is to focus the environmental studies by narrowing down the number of alignments, station locations, and high-speed train systems for continued investigation in the Draft Program Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS).

Upon receiving your comments and suggestions, as well as comments from others, staff will prepare a final draft for your approval at the November 14th Board meeting.